

# Article

## Urban governance transformations and the first two years of the N2 Gateway project in Cape Town<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

South African cities regularly experience service delivery protests, which often target local governments who are blamed for non-delivery and non-participation. The legitimacy crisis of local democracy can be understood in the context of broader urban governance transformations since 1994, with implications for city governments' ability to deliver services and realise participatory governance. This paper explores the initial phase of the N2 Gateway project from 2004 to 2006 as a case study of the politics of urban governance in Cape Town. As a centralised and politically driven project, the experiences from the first phase of N2 Gateway shows how local actors were sidelined and how narrow participatory mechanisms failed to engage local government actors and community interests, contributing to a local politicisation of exclusion and allocation.

### Introduction

South Africa has implemented a range of institutional reforms in order to construct democratic and developmental local governments. But realising participatory democracy and socioeconomic redistribution have been difficult, and service delivery protests have regularly swept South African cities. The protests target local governments and ward councillors and reflect a growing legitimacy crisis of local democracy. Delft, a township in Cape Town, has been a site of discontent and conflicts over the construction and allocation of housing built as part of the N2 Gateway housing project. This paper explores the initial phase of the N2 Gateway project from 2004 to 2006 as a case study of the politics of urban governance in Cape Town and Delft.

In the first section, I discuss how the N2 Gateway project was informed by and intersected with governance transformations at the national and urban level. Despite its technocratic design and focus on delivery, the N2 Gateway project was a deeply political project. I explore how the project became politicised through the divisive oppositional politics of Cape Town. In the second part, I first discuss limits to participation in housing and the N2 Gateway project in Cape Town, before I examine how the politics of participation impacted upon the first phase of implementation of the project in Delft. I limit the analysis to structured (invited) participation, and how this affected local politicisation of the project. A main point is how limited participatory mechanisms failed to engage local government actors and community interests, contributing to a politicisation of exclusion and allocation.

The paper is based on research with several stages of fieldwork in Cape Town and Delft from 2004-2006. As part of the fieldwork, I worked with a local community group called Concerned Residents of Delft (CRD), affiliated to the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC). CRD was involved in organising a broad-based community forum at the time, which also gave me an opportunity to get to know other organisations and actors in Delft. A governance lens on community organising shifts attention towards the multiple relations between state, non-state actors and community politics. Hence, I interviewed officials in local and provincial government in addition to consultants, NGO workers and local politicians. These interviews provided valuable insights into the challenges with institutional restructuring, experiences with participation and the politicised nature of housing.

This article does not focus on the private sector in the N2 Gateway project. Neither does it consider conflicts related to the Joe Slovo informal settlement and their relocation to Delft, issues which have been critically assessed by others (DAG 2007, COHRE 2009). Rather, my aim is to highlight the particular way this project intersected with and became politicised in the Delft community before the relocation and before the more profiled conflicts after 2007.

### ***Cape Town, Delft and the N2 Gateway project***

When the N2 Gateway project was announced in 2004, Cape Town was facing an escalating housing crisis. Despite building 250,000 houses in the Western Cape since 1994, the housing backlog increased from an estimated 150,000 units in 1998, to 265,000 units in 2004, and was 'a welfare bomb

waiting to explode' (CCT 2006:15). The N2 Gateway project was a national pilot project for the new housing policy *Breaking New Ground: A comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements* (BNG) (DoH 2004) and was supposed to provide some of the answers to the crisis. The project targeted the informal settlements along the N2 highway, which links the international airport to the city centre. Houses were to be built through a roll-over upgrading where residents would be temporarily relocated (DAG 2007). Some housing developments were planned in Delft, a township 35 km from Cape Town city centre, but the township also became a site for the temporary relocation of informal settlement residents.

Delft is an example of how earlier housing policies failed to tackle the segregated nature of the apartheid city, where poor people were housed in the periphery with limited opportunities. Over 12,000 houses were built in Delft as part of the *Integrated Serviced Land Project* (ISLP) between 1994 and 2002. When the ISLP was closed down, the remaining phase of development, Delft 7-9, was transferred to the N2 Gateway project. A massive fire in the Joe Slovo Informal settlement (one of the largest areas targeted for upgrading) changed the situation for N2 Gateway project and Delft significantly, when temporary relocation areas (TRA) were established in Delft 7-9 (the cemetery site) to house fire victims from Joe Slovo (for a detailed account, see DAG 2007).

The building of Delft was one of the first projects in which the new government used housing development as a tool for racial integration, with ambiguous results. While the residents are proud to be living in a desegregated community, apartheid had left a legacy of racial division that continued to inform associational life within the township. Associational life is characterised by fluidity and there are numerous community organisations and groups based on multiple interests. The fragmented nature of local government-community relations and community organising is a challenge (Millstein 2008).

Media reports and documents about the N2 Gateway project controversies have focused on how Joe Slovo residents have resisted moving to Delft; a relocation they see as a violation of their rights to housing, work and education, given Delft's peripheral location (COHRE 2009). Residents in Delft on the other hand, were concerned that the influx of people would put pressure on social services, and that the N2 Gateway did not consider their housing needs. Housing has been a contested and multifaceted issue in the township, ranging from grievances over bad quality and size of the houses,

a growing number of backyard dwellers who need formal housing, evictions, and access to resources provided by housing projects. So when the N2 Gateway project was initiated, conflicts re-emerged over three main issues: the allocation of housing units, limited participation, and access to jobs and training opportunities provided as part of the implementation.

### **Theorising urban governance in post-apartheid South Africa**

Governance is a commonly used and contested concept. It can be described as structures such as hierarchies or networks, but also as processes of steering control and decision-making (Pierre and Peters 2002). In European research, a main focus has been on how new modes of governance emerge in relation to globalisation and may challenge or transform the power of the central state (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999, Jessop 2002, Brenner 2004, Swyngedouw 2005). While this agenda is grounded in empirical focus on Western cities, urban governance has also become a growing field of research in African countries which often represent critical challenges to the Eurocentrism of urban theories and provide insights to the limitations of the governance and development debates more broadly.

In the development literature, the governance concept has tended to be caught up in debates about a neo-liberal technocratic good governance agenda. The focus has been on managerial practices and the way in which governance institutions have been constructed, instead of exploring the political implications of democratic institutions and practises in changing local spaces (Harriss et al 2004). This managerial approach has been challenged in the recent work on urban politics and governance in the global South, which focuses on the dynamics of urban governance as it relates to broader politics of development and democratisation (McCarney and Stren 2003, Devas 2004, Pieterse 2008). Changing modes of governance construct less clear horizontal and vertical lines of political accountability, and challenge our understanding of democratic representation as being the aggregation of interests through political parties and electoral politics (Barnett and Low 2004, Harriss et al 2004). Many of these contributions also emphasise the importance of the central state in shaping urban governance and politics through networks that cross the state, market, and civil society divides (Swilling 1997). This makes urban governance a deeply relational and political process (Pieterse 2008).

South Africa has developed a comprehensive framework for political representation and participation at a local level (RSA 1998a, RSA 1998b, RSA

2000). These policies were informed by broader international debates about governance; for instance, the focus on efficiency in the White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998a) is partially informed by new public management ideas (Parnell and Pieterse 2002). South Africa's developmental policies could thus be seen as a reflection of a neoliberal global governance agenda, emphasising partnerships between the state, capital and civil society (Edigheji 2003) where delivery is framed as a technical exercise rather than a political question (McLennan 2007). But it is important to consider the political nature of the transformation, and how international discourses have been mediated and modified in the post-apartheid context. Substantial transformation of local governance was also an important demand from various components of the anti-apartheid movement (Stren 2003). This suggests that the policy frameworks have been informed by conflicting ideas and interests between, on the one hand, top-down reforms and new public management, and on the other hand, the bottom-up ideas of participatory democracy (Pieterse 2002). These contradictory ideas inform the construction of spaces for participation at the city and community level.

Debates about participation in South Africa has to some extent been dichotomised between those who see civil society organisations and movements within a discourse of struggle for socio-economic justice and in opposition to the state, and others who focus on participation and restructuring governance in order for civil society and social movements to engage with the state (Habib and Kotzé 2003, Ballard et al 2006). An increasingly rich research on local participation has also focused on the ambiguities of the ward-based participatory system and explored the inclusion and exclusion of citizens and local civil society actors in governance (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008a). Miraftab and Wills (2005) make use of Cornwall's (2002) distinction between invited and invented spaces of citizenship to explore such processes in Cape Town. Invited spaces refer to state-initiated arenas for participation where the power to decide who is included and excluded is embedded within the state. Social movements in Cape Town respond to these narrow participatory mechanisms by inventing alternative arenas for participation and make use of more insurgent tactics. Miraftab and Wills emphasise the relations between these spaces, but as an analytical approach it runs the risk of idealising invented spaces as 'true' spaces of grassroots participation, while invited spaces are framed as being less relevant and more often than not dominated by more powerful actors. While this is true in many cases, invited participatory platforms can provide political opportunities for

mobilisation, and work as a platform for learning about complex local governance systems (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008a,b). Depending on local social and political contexts, these invited spaces may strengthen the accountability and legitimacy of political representatives (Gervais-Lambony 2008). The invited-invented distinction might also be problematic if the aim is to understand the politics that emerge as community groups, social movements and other civil society actors continuously move across these spaces (Oldfield and Stokke 2006). Hence, the democratic effect of institutionalised participatory platforms has to be understood within its specific social and political contexts.

### **Breaking New Ground and the N2 Gateway project**

In 2004, the N2 Gateway project was launched as one of several pilot projects for the new housing policy *Breaking New Ground* (BNG) (DoH 2004, 2005). The N2 Gateway project was premised upon a unique cooperation between all spheres of government and the City of Cape Town (CoCT) was defined as the driving force as project manager (DoH 2005). This was a shift from previous strategies towards informal settlements, where local governments had played a limited role as a provider of infrastructure (Graham 2006). Despite building over two million houses, delivery had not kept up with increasing demands. In the reviews of the first 10 years of democracy in 2004, dissatisfaction with housing delivery was one of the main concerns (Huchzermeyer 2006). It was also acknowledged that existing housing policies had not achieved spatial integration, but rather cemented segregated patterns of the apartheid city. There was a thus need to rethink a policy framework for creating sustainable human settlements in a more holistic manner. However, there have been debates as to what extent the BNG was really a break with previous policies (Charlton and Kihato 2006). Huchzermeyer (2006) argues that the BNG did represent a major shift in the policy approach, but that the choice of the pilot projects for the BNG such as the N2 Gateway project was defined more by political considerations than local governments' priorities.

The N2 Gateway project was launched at a time characterised by major political changes, with the ANC coming to power in Cape Town in 2002, followed by centralisation of political power at the urban and national level. Then president Mbeki's State of the Nation speeches in 2004 and 2005 have been analysed as return to a more technocratic and centralised development strategy (Southall 2006), where service delivery is perceived to be above

politics (McLennan 2007). The ANC rhetoric shifted according to its 2004 national election manifesto's promises to deliver, and some politicians also argued that people were now being tired of participation and wanted the quick provision of houses by government (COHRE 2009). The emphasis on rapid delivery is also reflected in the national service delivery targets that came out of the review of the first 10 years of democracy in 2004. These targets were developed to assess progress and to evaluate the performance of municipalities, which were seen as the main obstacle for the implementation of service delivery (DoH 2005, Pieterse and van Donk 2008). However, the pressure on rapid delivery conflicted with the holistic objectives of the BNG policy (Pieterse and van Donk 2008).

As Bénit-Gbaffou (2008a) notes in reference to the metropolitan level the urgent need for redistribution seem to have been used to legitimise centralisation of decision-making at a national scale. The shifts imply that there was no more time for participation, and no more time for politics. But the framing of N2 Gateway project in technocratic terms as part of government's drive towards delivery concealed the politicised nature of project. Also, the launch of the project coincided with two other events. The World Cup bid had just been awarded to South Africa, and some argued that the project was less about poverty alleviation and more about a beautification agenda driven by a neoliberal new public management regime (Newton 2009). Also, local elections were planned for 2006, and the project could be read as an effort by the ANC to increase their support in Cape Town. These factors contributed to making the N2 Gateway project a deeply political endeavour.

## **N2 Gateway and urban governance in Cape Town**

I think some things have improved. ... we had six different policies and people got confused, so from that point of view there is a more unified approach now, there is one mayor, one policy. So politically it is more stable. Although we have had a lot of changes, we have had four Mayors in three years... oh my.... Every time we had a new political [leadership] we get new political things. We had new political masters, they got new ideas....Now it is stable; it is not good I would say, but it is stable.... But yes, all these changes that we had in the last four years were terrible in terms of that [delivery]. (Local official 1, January 12, 2005)

Local government transformations in Cape Town reflect the contradictory tendencies within the national policy frameworks. Politically, Western Cape and Cape Town are also the only province and metropolitan area where ANC meet strong opposition. Political identities in Cape Town are linked to the

apartheid-constructed racial identities which deeply inform party-politics: while the ANC draws their support from the black population the support base for the DA is mainly the coloured and white population in the city. When the 2006 local elections produced a council with no clear majority, a DA-ANC coalition could represent a large majority of citizens (Faull 2006), but the two parties' inability to resolve their political differences, and most importantly with regard to a politics of race, made such a coalition unlikely (Jolobe 2007). This racialised politics was evident in the discussions about N2 Gateway housing allocation before the 2006 elections (see below).

### ***Administrative restructuring and limited capacity***

According to local and provincial officials interviewed for this project, the housing crisis in Cape Town was a result of under-spending of budgets, intergovernmental tensions, bureaucratic red-tape, the lack of a broader development strategy, the lack of coordination between plans, programmes and budgets across state spheres, and limited capacity in local government to fulfil their obligations (see also Provincial government of the Western Cape 2002, Khan and Ambert 2003). The continuous state of restructuring of local government institutions had affected CoCT's delivery capacity, so a main issue in 2004/2005 was whether the city could play the anticipated role in the N2 Gateway project.

The emphasis on intergovernmental partnership in BNG was supported by the city's administration, and officials supported the diversity underscoring the new policy. They were positive about efforts to build better quality products and more diverse settlements. Officials were also fairly content with how they had been consulted in the processes of formulating a new housing policy (see also Huchzermeyer 2006). But they worried about the political control of the N2 Gateway project and the developer-driven character of the project. Officials argued that the N2 Gateway project diverged from BNG objectives, and that the project ran too fast and with little consideration for the pressure on the City's capacity. The process of integrating six municipal structures into a coherent UniCity system in 2000 was still affecting the city's operational capacity. The continuous state of restructuring had left the UniCity with a structure but without an organisation; city management still operated as if they were divided (local housing official 5, March 18, 2005). Hence, these frustrations among officials reflect Graham's observations of a 'disjuncture between what politicians at both the national and local levels envisage for informal



settlements and what the officials believe is possible and sustainable given the available resources' (2006:238).

### ***Centralisation and politicisation of the N2 Gateway***

The governing of the N2 Gateway project was centralised and kept under firm political control. There were also moves towards centralisation of decision-making in CoCT more generally. ANC introduced the Executive Mayoral system in 2002, and more decision-making powers were delegated from Council to the Executive Mayor and the Mayoral Committee (MayCo). In N2 Gateway, the leadership and management of the project were kept under ANC scrutiny through the M3 leader group: the National Housing Minister, the Provincial Housing Minister and the Executive Mayor of Cape Town (local official 6, June 7, 2005). The main oversight and information about the project in Cape Town was located in the Executive Mayoral Office, at the expense of the broader council and other interests in the city.

This centralisation within the Executive Mayoral System, and in the M3 leadership group in the N2 Gateway project, was met with cautious concern from officials. The rationale was to speed up decision-making, so that decisions did not have to await Council meetings. Instead, the Mayor and MayCo would play a central role in collaboration with senior management. More efficient cooperation at higher levels could help overcoming bureaucratic red-tape, and prevent fragmentation. The political alignments under ANC leadership also opened a space for more cooperative governance; after five years of political instability, administrative reforms and different political leadership in national provincial and local government, ANC's political control made the N2 Gateway project possible (Khan 2004). The housing crisis in Cape Town was partially a result of the divisive politics, causing intergovernmental tensions, rapidly changing political priorities, and instabilities in the city administration (Khan 2004). Hence, officials appreciated the stable political situation, but also saw centralisation of decision-making as a shift of power away from the lower levels of the administration. This, they argued, created more pressure at a leadership level in political structures and in the city administration that had in fact slowed down implementation. This happened at the same time as local government was experiencing increasing pressure to deliver upon the national targets (local official 6, June 7, 2005). On the other hand, officials argued that high political profile through the M3 leader group could increase the political legitimacy of the N2 Gateway project. Active involvement from the political

leadership had strengthened the legitimacy of previous housing projects in Delft, where the political buy-in from Council and the mayor had been important (local official 2, interview 2, March 8, 2005).

These shifts may increase political accountability and transparent decision-making to the extent that officials do not take decisions behind closed doors. But opposition councillors, housing NGOs and community organisations were frustrated by the lack of accessibility, accountability and transparency in the planning and decision-making processes of the N2 Gateway project. This, they claimed, was the result of the concentration of information and decision-making in the M3, at the Mayor's office and at MayCo. In a housing portfolio committee in March 2005, the main concern was limited information to the Council and communities (personal observation, March 15, 2005).

In 2004, the ANC's control in Cape Town was fragile. The swift establishment and ambitious aims of the N2 Gateway project can be seen as an attempt to strengthen the ANC's position before the 2006 local elections. The N2 Gateway project thus became deeply politicised and caught up in racial and oppositional politics at a city and community scale. Housing allocation was perhaps the most contested issue. In January 2005, the Executive Mayor announced that the 70 per cent of the N2 Gateway houses would be allocated to residents in the informal settlements, and 30 per cent to people from the CoCT's housing waiting lists (*IOL News*, February 15, 2005). This became a racialised issue, when the opposition and residents in predominantly coloured townships objected to what they saw as an unfair favouring of mainly black newcomers, while people in the older townships had been waiting for years (*IOL News*, February 20, 2005). The allocation principles and relocation of people were never really discussed with communities beforehand (see also COHRE 2009). When the M3 also linked this allocation as a solution for the 12,000 people who were made homeless after the fire in Joe Slovo, it only spurred more anger in the city. In the run-up for the local elections, the allocation issue became further politicised. DA councillors accused ANC of racism because of the decision to prioritise the (mainly black) residents of the informal settlements, while people on the city's waiting list were ignored. ANC on the other hand, blamed DA for playing the race card to discredit ANC's efforts to rectify the legacies of apartheid and provide decent housing for the urban poor.

As a result of the politicisation of the N2 Gateway project in the city, and the CoCT's trouble with playing the anticipated role as a project manager

(irregular tender processes have also been revealed in this period according to the *Cape Argus*, May 1, 2009), the CoCT's responsibility was withdrawn in March 2006. Intergovernmental tensions escalated when DA won back the CoCT in the 2006 local elections. The new mayor Helen Zille claimed that the ANC left her with a poisoned chalice and in response to Zille's public outcry, the Housing MinMec (a forum of the Minister of Housing and the Provincial MECs for housing) removed CoCT from 'any further responsibilities of the project beyond what they are constitutionally responsible for' (Department of Housing Press release, June 12, 2006) in June 2006 (see also COHRE 2009).

### **Limits to participation**

The N2 Gateway project coincided with shifts in local government institutions at a community level. Ward committees were established in January 2005, and wards were increasingly seen as the main spaces for state-community engagement where ward councillors were given a central role as a representative, or voice, of a community. Although it was limited space for participation in the initial phase of the N2 Gateway project, the way in which the project intersected with ward-based participation became deeply contested in Delft.

The M3 stated early in the process that the fast-tracking of the project would leave less space for community participation (Delivery 2005). This was nonetheless a deviation from the broader objectives of the BNG policy and also of the National housing code (COHRE 2009). There was some dialogue with civil society in the BNG policy-making process (Huchzermeyer 2006) but except for a meeting in May 2004 to discuss preliminary plans for the N2 Gateway project, housing NGOs in Cape Town had not been involved (NGO worker 2, February 21, 2005). Also, the engagement with communities was restricted to the implementation phase (local official 6, June 7, 2005). An official said they had tried to create opportunities for participation, but that the M3 had intervened:

It was raised right in the beginning; the need to consult and bring the communities along. We've all been involved in housing for many years, and that [community participation] is a ground rule. But we were instructed by this level [the M3] that we haven't got time for that, it will be done later, and they will deal with it. (local official 6, June 7, 2005)

Graham (2006) suggests that CoCT's bad track record with participation in the housing sector and more specifically to informal settlements, rely on a

weak political support for in situ upgrading, which ideally requires time-consuming negotiations with existing communities. CoCT preferred a managed approach to participation, where officials and politicians seek a mandate to legitimate cooperation and intervention (Graham 2006). However, even narrow participatory practices seem to have been ignored in the N2 Gateway project. Officials were particularly frustrated over how the N2 Gateway project disregarded the experiences in the city and provincial administration from housing programmes such as the ISLP, in particular the time-consuming process of negotiating with multiple interests and actors in the communities (see also Cross 2006). The approach to participation in ISLP was perhaps limited to more top-down invited participation. But these processes, which started before the first elections in 1996, ensured legitimacy in a context where local and provincial government had no legitimacy at all (consultant 1, January 7, 2005). In a context of divisive politics and tensions, experiences from the ISLP reflect how fast-track delivery driven projects also need to secure some form of participation to be able to deliver at all. As a provincial official (January 7, 2005) put it: ‘if you skip community participation in housing delivery you will win a month and lose a year’, which seems to be exactly what happened with the N2 Gateway project.

### *The initial phase of N2 Gateway in Delft*

With the increasing emphasis on wards as spaces for participation, ward councillors became central actors in community-local government relations. The ambiguous experiences with ward-based participation in other cities are also evident in Delft, such as difficult and ambiguous role of ward councillors (Bénit-Gbaffou 2008b) and the entrenchment of party-political agendas on the ward committees despite their non-partisan definition (Piper and Deacon 2006). Also, experiences of community organisations in Delft reflect that local government fragmentations can at times provide political opportunities but also weaken local legitimacy as community organisations struggle against each other to get access to resources (Millstein 2008, Bénit-Gbaffou 2008b).

What made the N2 Gateway project particularly contested was the political fragmentation of Delft and the particular role of ward councillors. Delft was divided into two sub-councils and three wards.<sup>2</sup> While two wards had a DA councillor, one ward was led by ANC. The main obstacle for community organisations were not always conflicting relations to the ward councillors (the relations changed significantly over time and depending on

issues at stake), but that ward councillors were reluctant to interfere in each others' wards:

We focus on the Delft issue not on the wards issues. The councillor is only restricted in terms of his wards. In other words Cllr [name] can't go to that ward, because that is ... Cllr [name]'s ward. Just for argument sake, he can't announce for instance. And the other thing is that the councillors there are DA, he is ANC. But regardless from the political affiliations, they don't work together, they don't have a councillor meetings or ... some form of how can we take Delft forward regardless of our political backgrounds. They never come forward and have ... sort of a joint meeting. (CRD activist 1, 2nd interview, March 20, 2005)

Community activists claimed that ward councillors were working in the interests of the council and/or party and used the position to strengthen their own constituency through personal connections rather than being concerned with community development. This division also informed their dismissal of the newly established ward committees in Delft, because they did not represent forums for broad based deliberation by all actors in Delft and were controlled by party political interests of the ward councillor. This might not inherently mean non-participation, but it structures what kind of voices that are being heard in broader governance processes (Piper and Deacon 2006).

Bénit-Gbaffou (2008b) argues that there are systemic reasons informing the contested role of ward councillors, rather than individual conduct alone. There seems to be an underlying assumption that councillors can transcend identities, interests and conflicts. While ward councillors are expected by those above them to serve as a singular voice of the community, residents of the ward expect councillors to accommodate multiple interests and organisations. Hence, ward councillors were actors in a dynamic and contested field of community politics, where the councillors' mandate was continuously open to contestation. The position as a key mediator in government-community relations is also a source of power for ward councillors. Their legitimacy depends on the ability to secure resources for community projects and include residents in decision-making processes. They are in a position to mediate relations to broader urban governance processes, channel information to sections of the community and decide who to include in activities, and how to allocate resources that are being made available for community projects (Millstein 2010). This is an important aspect of how the first phase of N2 Gateway was implemented in Delft, where

ward councillors were central in allocation of job and training opportunities in the community.

The centralised and politically driven nature of the N2 Gateway project meant that local officials and ward councillors, NGOs and community organisations were sidelined in the initial phase of the project. In February 2005, community organisations accused ward councillors of withholding information about the N2 Gateway project. A local ward councillor on the other hand, said that the problem was that the Mayor and the M3 Group had yet to engage with them. This put ward councillors in a difficult position because they simply did not have any information to bring to the community (local councillor 2, interview 1, March 2, 2005). Hence, the initial information about N2 Gateway in Delft came through media reports. There was limited information about the project, and exactly how communities would be able to participate remained unclear.

After much uncertainty and increasing frustration about the relocation of Joe Slovo residents in Delft, something had to be done. First, a community meeting was organised by the ANC ward councillor on March 16, 2005, to inform about the relocation of Joe Slovo residents and get the consent from the community. Residents claimed that it had only been announced in the ANC ward, not in the other parts of Delft; the only reason they knew about the meeting was because they had heard about it through their social networks. The community gave their approval in the sense that the ANC ward councillor allowed his allies to speak, all in favour of the move (personal observation and conversations, March 16, 2005). A week later, the Executive Mayor came to address the community about the 'Joe Slovo issue' and try to calm the growing frustration. In this meeting, the other councillors were absent and residents again claimed that it had mainly been announced in the ANC ward (personal conversations, March 23, 2005). Hence, information and structured participation was not just streamlined into the ward system; it seems to have been done so in a particular way, informed by political considerations and as an effort to seek legitimacy for already made decisions rather than bringing community voices and interests into the process.

### ***Politicisation of housing allocation and resources***

In Delft, N2 Gateway became a question of allocation of houses and resources. These grievances emerged as an insider-outsider dichotomy where a just allocation would be to make sure that Delft residents would benefit from job and housing opportunities. This framing of resources in

territorially demarcated localities or communities are not just a result of grassroots mobilisation, but also structured by the particular way that a notion of community is constructed. Jensen (2004) has argued that

As had the old, so did the new government evoke notions of community, and as had the old, so did the new government objectify communities as sites of governmental intervention. (Jensen 2004: 187)

‘Communities’ and ‘community representation’ are represented in ways that assume that ‘community interests’ can be easily transferred into broader governance processes, for instance, by ward councillors. Ward councillors are thus seen as main actors who could speak and work for a unified community. This also informs an apolitical notion of community development, which in Delft was reinforced both by councillors and community organisations. Two quotes reflect how one of the councillors replicated similar apolitical understanding of his role in the community, while at the same time using projects like the N2 Gateway project in party-political contestations:

... I don't play politics with community development. At all my community meetings I never talk about politics and I'm on record for that. I never push my party forward. I only deal with the community at hand and that's it. (Local councillor 2, interview 1, March 2, 2005)

In distancing himself from politics when working with community development, the councillor reinforced distinctions between party-politics and community development; partially as a response to his position as both a party representative and a ‘community voice’. Later in the interview, the councillor commented upon his role at a community meeting in Delft:

Out of courtesy I went there Sunday, and it was a beauty I was there. I was the only councillor there... To give them the message about the N2 Gateway project was a beauty. (Local councillor 2, interview 1, March 2, 2005)

The message was a critique of ANC's choice of housing allocation in the N2 Gateway project, which he argued would not benefit Delft residents. The councillor was careful not to make it a coloured-black issue; instead he used ‘Delft against the rest’ analogy and argued for a 50-50 allocation principle (which was the DA's demand at the time). This was well received among the participants at the meeting, and became an important demand from community organisations in Delft.

While the allocation issue in party-political debates turned into a racial

issue, the demand for 50 per cent allocation in Delft actually helped transcend racial tensions. Both black and coloured residents saw themselves as rightful beneficiaries in contrast to the informal settlement ‘newcomers’, echoing the insider-newcomer dichotomy. This politicisation had limited effect on the implementation of N2 Gateway, but it initially helped overcome some racial divisions that had characterised associational life in Delft. It is also an important background for more recent conflicts, where grievances have continued to reflect this insider-outsider logic.

There are some challenges with this localised politics of resource allocation. First, it reinforced competition between community organisations who tried to access and get some level of control over the limited resources that would become available as part of the N2 Gateway project. In Delft, an effort to set up a Delft forum for community organisations, largely in response to the divided and contested nature of ward committees, collapsed in May/June 2005; instead, community activists started positioning themselves in order to gain access to resources. Secondly, it can to some extent fragment inter-community relations. Community activists demanded that no outsiders should get a job building N2 Gateway houses in Delft. While this is perhaps understandable, it can represent obstacles to building networks and solidarities across communities. More recently, a housing conflict in Mandela Park in Cape Town over newly built housing seems to reflect similar logic of local entitlements (*West Cape News*, November 29, 2011). The invasion of the N2 Gateway houses in Delft in December 2007 was also legitimised by insider-outsider notion, between the rights of those living in backyards, and the relocation and allocation of houses to ‘outsiders’ from informal settlements. While understandable and also legitimate as poor residents mobilise to get access to their constitutional rights, this might also become a challenge to broader aims of integrated urban development. Having said this, it was mobilisation and networking by the AEC groups in Cape Town that turned the housing allocation issue into being about poverty and actual needs, rather than racial identities. For instance, they organised a rally in 2005 with participants coming from informal settlements as well as formal townships (observation, September 17, 2005).

Community activists in Delft argued that the bias of power towards the ward councillors had to be resolved in order to strengthen democratic governance. Ward councillors should engage more closely with other community actors across the ward divisions to ground their mandate in local grievances.<sup>3</sup> The allocation of resources related to N2 Gateway and other



projects should be transparent; they may be informal and not necessarily follow formal procedures, as long as it is done in accordance with all actors in Delft and not within the respective wards. In contrast, a community group was set up by the private contractor and councillor in June 2005, but only in the ANC-led ward; apparently as a result of the political divisions. This also happened without consulting community organisations from the other areas of Delft (observation from meeting between CRD and Power Development, June 7, 2005). In September 2005, the political fragmentation was still a significant problem. One of the contractors claimed that the project was delayed because the ward councillors could not work together (personal conversation, September 10, 2005). When training opportunities were to be allocated, the ward councillors split the available positions and held separate recruitment meetings in their ward. According to the trainers (September 9, 2005), this fragmentation had delayed the recruitment of residents significantly. They claimed that they encountered similar constraints in other communities in Cape Town, making the implementation of the programmes a challenging task. In Delft, it fuelled already existing frustrations towards the ward councillors, and was seen as yet another example of how the councillors would only provide job and training opportunities to their own allies. Hence, the political fragmentations and lack of dialogue weakened the legitimacy of councillors and reinforced allegations of corrupt conduct.

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion has teased out some of the challenges with the initial phase of the N2 Gateway project in the context of institutional restructuring and divisive politics in Cape Town. The way that information was disseminated and how the structured participation was implemented, meant that community organisations were never made part of the N2 Gateway project. Furthermore, the decision to relocate people to Delft happened through a meeting which could pay lip service to the already made decision.

The current mode of structured participation seems to be ill-equipped to negotiate the inherent antagonistic politics of urban governance processes and development interventions such as the N2 Gateway project. From a critical perspective, a major weakness is the limited spaces of participation and arenas for democratic politics in the city (see also Pieterse 2008). Seen from a more instrumental perspective, some level of participation is a key to make delivery happen; even if this reflects more limited modes of engagement. These participatory and democratic dimensions were ignored, leading to

stronger mobilisation, tensions and conflicts among those whom the project was suppose to assist; the urban poor in Cape Town.

The spaces for participation were narrowed by the simultaneous process of political centralisation and streamlining of formal state-community relations into ward-based participation. For many local groups, the only viable strategy left, the only space of action, was direct protest to challenge the project. The narrowing of the opportunities to participate is contributing to the legitimacy crisis and to the politicisation of the right to participation. Experiences from Delft suggest that urban poor in Cape Town did not just mobilise in response to local grievances over access to housing, but to the structures, processes and practises through which their grievances were meant to be realised. The obstacles, tensions and delays that emerged in relation to the N2 Gateway project undermine the flawed perception that people now want delivery, not participation; rather, it is a question of what kind of legitimate participation and at what level, is appropriate for a project of this scale.

## Notes

1. The article is based on research for a PhD project at the University of Oslo on the politics of urban governance and community organising in Cape Town, and was funded by the Norwegian Research Council. A first draft of the paper that focused more generally on urban governance and participation in addition to the N2 Gateway, was presented at a seminar with the International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) in Visby (Sweden) and was published as part of their occasional papers series in 2010.

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2. I focused mainly on two of these three wards, as the third ward had only a small part of Delft within its borders and the ward councillor seemed to have only limited relations with the community.
3. Conclusion from ILRIG workshop on local democracy, 8-10 June, 2005.

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